

2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT – B (December 10, 2023)

Imagine for a moment that you are God. You have created everything out of nothing, you have created life and have even made some creatures in your own image and likeness. You did that out of a mighty and generous love because you wanted them to share in your love. You made them free to say ‘no’ to you, but you very much desire their ‘yes’. Unfortunately, these free beings you have made messed up—they chose against you, and you are saddened by their turning away from you. But, as God, you decide on a plan to bring them back to yourself, and you do so out of your sheer love for them. So here’s the question: what would you do, as God, to bring them back to yourself—what kind of plan or strategy would you set up?

--use your divine power to heal everyone immediately with a snap of your divine fingers?

--go back to that first moment when your creatures said ‘no’ to you, and somehow ‘erase’ that moment and start all over again?

--or would you just think: “well, they obviously don’t want me, so I’m outta here—they’re on their own.”

Fortunately for us, the one true God’s solution to sin’s entry into the world is something we could never have dreamed of. He set in place a plan for salvation that involved the very creatures who turned away from him in the first place. This is a stroke of utterly divine genius! God set this plan in motion thousands of years ago by revealing himself to Abraham and Moses and David and Isaiah and so many others throughout salvation history. He revealed himself as creator and lover as well, and through those individuals he promised the coming of One who would be the Savior of all.

And at the proper time, when all was prepared in accord with the divine plan, God sent an angel to speak to a young woman, a sinless young woman, in Nazareth who he had chosen and prepared to conceive and give birth to a Son who would be that Savior. We recently heard that Annunciation gospel on the feast of Mary’s Immaculate Conception. Then in today’s gospel we encounter again that strange man at the Jordan River—he of the camel’s-hair wardrobe and locusts-and-honey diet. John the Baptist was the one chosen by God to do the important work of preparing the people for the immediate coming of the Lord.

It really is quite amazing. Over and over again, throughout the course of salvation history and into our own time, God calls various individuals to fulfill their role in the divine desire and plan for our salvation and for that of all. And that call is extended not only to the Abrahams and Davids, the Virgin Marys and the John-the-Baptists of salvation history, but to every single one of us as well. He relies on each of us to use the gifts he has given us in the vocation to which he calls us to keep moving forward his plan for the salvation of all through his Son. That call is extended to every husband and wife, every parent and child; every farmer and laborer, every teacher and homemaker, everyone who is retired, ailing or disabled in any way or degree.

I recently came across a good reflection on this whole idea in which the author reminds each of us: “At your baptism, Jesus entered the world in a new way through his union with you and all that is unique in you. When you received the Eucharist, Jesus renews his call and accompanies you...on the particular path he chooses for you...for your good, and the good of all his holy Church.” God has equipped every one of us in a unique way as he equipped the great figures of salvation history in their unique ways to be an active part of his plan for the salvation of the world. Let’s not be afraid to pray each day to know and do what God wants of us in the particular circumstances of our own lives to keep his plan for our salvation moving forward. And remember: God really does call us to be directly involved in that process. We can only repeat: what an act of utterly divine...and loving genius!